

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 247

By Tracy

A RESOLUTION recognizing William I. Butler of Savannah.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans have continued this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, William I. "Bill" Butler is one such valorous Tennessean, whose service in the United States Army during World War II stands as an inspiration to his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, a native of Martin, Bill Butler was drafted into the Army in June of 1941; after completing his basic training, he was assigned to the 454th Ordnance, 27th Bomb Group, based at the Savannah Air Base in Savannah, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, he and his group landed at Manila eighteen days before the United States officially entered World War II; following the bombing of Clark Field on Christmas Day, 1941, Mr. Butler assisted in the evacuation of Clark Field to Bataan Field and then to Mariveles Field; and

WHEREAS, during the raging battle for the Philippines, Bill Butler served with courage and aplomb through several months of fierce struggle, which carried on until the surrender of 70,000 troops by General Edward King to the Japanese Army; and

WHEREAS, Bill Butler, drawing on a seemingly endless supply of fortitude, survived four years of unspeakable treatment at the hands of the Japanese Army; after enduring the tragic Bataan Death March, he withstood three years of brutal and inhuman conditions in Japanese concentration camps before being transported aboard one of the "hell ships" to Japan, where he spend the last year of his confinement in the Narumi POW Camp; and

WHEREAS, while the Japanese battled for Corregidor, the surrendered Allied troops were forced to march sixty miles in intense heat with almost no food and water; between five thousand and eleven thousand troops never made it to Camp O'Donnell, the POW camp at the end of the horrible Bataan Death March; and

WHEREAS, while held as a prisoner of war, Mr. Butler spent time at Camp O'Donnell, Cabanatuan, and Bilibid; and

WHEREAS, in July of 1944, he spent eighteen days aboard a "hell ship" bound for Japan; these ships were packed with prisoners of war, many of them sick and dying and many of whom did not survive the crossing; and

WHEREAS, while imprisoned in the Narumi POW Camp, Bill Butler was forced to work at a locomotive factory in Nagoyia before the liberation of the POWs after the surrender of Japan in September of 1945; and

WHEREAS, after a long and tortuous wartime experience, Mr. Butler finally returned home and was discharged by the Army at the rank of Staff Sergeant in June of 1946; and

WHEREAS, for his service during World War II, Bill Butler was awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and Good Conduct medals; and

WHEREAS, Bill Butler earned a bachelor of science degree in agriculture in 1947; he worked for the PET Milk Company before accepting a post at the University of Tennessee Extension Service as a 4-H Assistant County Agent in Hardin County; and

WHEREAS, displaying an unwavering dedication to excellence and inspiring leadership qualities, Mr. Butler guided Hardin County 4-H groups to a vaulted level of success, leading them to capture awards and recognition throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, he was later promoted to County Agent, a position in which he served acumen and alacrity until his retirement; and

WHEREAS, perhaps the most inspiring quality Mr. Butler possesses is his desire to pass along his story to thousands of young men and women; each year for several decades, he has relayed his experiences during World War II to the students of South Haven Christian School during their annual field trip to Shiloh; and

WHEREAS, the impact of Mr. Butler's story and the measure of his humanity is such that, in a display of gratitude, a 4-H scholarship has been founded in his name; the scholarship is given each year to a deserving eighth grader; and

WHEREAS, he is perhaps most appreciative of the love and companionship he shares with his daughter, Paula Jones, and his two grandchildren, Chris and Clint Jones; and

WHEREAS, this valiant Tennessean has established an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Bill Butler's dedication to excellence and his love for his family, his fellow soldiers, and his country, as exemplified by his valiant defense of all that he holds dear during World War II, stand as enduring examples of the characteristics that have ensured the continued freedom of our Nation and the preservation of its ideals over the course of our history; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly should pause to remember the singular patriotism, courage, and commitment to duty of this exceptional soldier and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor William I. Butler, a man of impeccable character, limitless courage, and stalwart commitment to the defense of his Nation as a member of the United States Army, even under the most tragic and terrible periods of duress, as we reflect upon his bravery and dedication to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.